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ABSTRACT

When parents and other family members read with their children, help them with homework, talk with their teachers, and participate in school or other learning activities, they give their children a tremendous advantage. The foundation for learning to read is in place long before children enter school and begin formal reading instruction. Families help to create this foundation by talking, listening, and reading to children every day and by showing them that reading is valued, used, and enjoyed. This booklet includes activities for families with children from infancy through age 6. The booklet's activities make learning experiences out of the everyday routines in which parents and children participate--most use materials that are found in the home or that can be had free-of-charge from the local library. Activities in the booklet are designed to be fun for parents and children as parents help their children to gain the skills they need to become readers. To help show when children can take certain learning steps, the booklet ties the discussion and activities to four age groups: baby (birth to 1 year); toddler (1 to 3 years); preschooler (ages 3 and 4); and kindergartner/early first grader (ages 5 and 6). Also included are: a reading checklist; list of typical age-related language accomplishments; list of resources for families/caregivers; and a list of resources for children. (Contains 13 references). (NKA)

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Helping Your Child

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Become a Reader

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No Child LEFT BEHIND

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Children's books and magazines are mentioned in this booklet as examples and are only a few of many appropriate children's books and periodicals. Other materials mentioned are provided as resources and examples for the reader's convenience. Listing of materials and resources in this book should not be construed or interpreted as an endorsement by the Department of any private organization or business listed herein.

Helping Your Child Become a Reader

With activities for children from infancy through age 6

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs

Foreword

Years of research show clearly that children are more likely to succeed in learning when their families actively support them. When you and other family members read with your children, help them with homework, talk with their teachers, and participate in school or other learning activities, you give your children a tremendous advantage.

Other than helping your children to grow up healthy and happy, the most important thing that you can do for them is to help them develop their reading skills. It is no exaggeration to say that how well children learn to read affects directly not only how successful they are in school but how well they do throughout their lives. When children learn to read, they have the key that opens the door to all the knowledge of the world. Without this key, many children are left behind.

At the heart of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* is a promise to raise standards for all children and to help all children meet those standards. To help meet this goal, the President is committed to supporting and promoting the very best teaching programs, especially those that teach young people how to read. Well-trained reading teachers and reading instruction that is based on research can bring the best teaching approaches and programs to all children and so help to ensure that "no child is left behind". However, the foundation for learning to read is in place long before children enter school and begin formal reading instruction. You and your family help to create this foundation by talking, listening, and reading to your children every day and by showing them that you value, use, and enjoy reading in your lives.

This booklet includes activities for families with children from infancy through age 6. Most of the activities make learning experiences out of the everyday routines in which you and your children participate. Most use materials that are found in your home or that can be had free-of-charge from your local library. The activities are designed to be fun for both you and your children as you help them to gain the skills they need to become readers. Enjoy them!

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Introduction

You could say that your baby starts on the road to becoming a reader on the day she* is born and first hears the sounds of your voice. Every time you speak to her, sing to her, and respond to the sounds that she makes, you strengthen your child's understanding of language. With you to guide her, she is well on her way to becoming a reader.

To understand the connection between a child's early experiences with spoken language and learning to read, you might think of language as a four-legged stool. The four legs are talking, listening, reading, and writing. All four legs are important; each leg helps to support and balance the others.

This booklet gives you information about how you can use your language skills to build your child's skills. It offers suggestions about how you can:

- Talk with and listen to your child.
- Read together with her.
- Help your child learn about books and print.
- Encourage your child's early writing efforts.
- Help your child learn to read if his first language is not English.
- Prepare your child for success in school.

The major portion of the booklet contains activities that you can use with your child to strengthen her language skills and encourage her love of reading. However, these activities are only a starting point. We hope that you and your child will enjoy them enough to create and try many more on your own. As a parent, you are your child's first and most important

* **Please note:** In this book, we refer to a child as "him" in some places and "her" in others. We do this to make the book easier to read. Please understand, however, that every point that we make about reading is the same for girls and boys.

teacher. You don't need to be the best reader to help—your time and interest and the pleasure that you share with your child as part of reading together are what counts. If you would like more information about helping your child with reading, this booklet also provides lists of books and Web sites and the names of groups that you can contact.

We all know that older children can do things that younger ones can't. This is true for reading, too. To help show when children can take certain learning steps, this booklet ties the discussion and activities to four age groups:

Baby = birth to 1 year
Toddler = 1 to 3 years
Preschooler = ages 3 and 4
Kindergartner/early first-grader = ages 5 and 6

Keep in mind, however, that children don't all learn at the same pace. And even though they learn new things, they may have "old favorites"—books and activities from earlier years—that they still enjoy. You are the best person to decide which activities will work best for your child.

Children become readers step by step. By age 7, most children are reading. Some take longer than others, and some need extra help. When children receive the right kind of help in their early years, reading difficulties that can arise later in their lives can be prevented. This booklet offers steps that you can take to start your child on the way to becoming a successful reader. It is an adventure that you will not want to miss, and the benefits for your child will last a lifetime.

"As parents, the most important thing we can do is read to our children early and often. Reading is the path to success in school and life. When children learn to love books, they learn to love learning."

—Laura Bush

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Becoming a Reader

Every step a child takes toward learning to read leads to another. Bit by bit, the child builds the knowledge that is necessary for being a reader. Over their first 6 years, most children

* Talk and listen.
* Listen to stories read aloud.
* Pretend to read.
* Learn how to handle books.
* Learn about print and how it works.
* Identify letters by name and shape.
* Identify separate sounds in spoken language.
* Write with scribbles and drawing.
* Connect single letters with the sounds they make.
* Connect what they already know to what they hear read.
* Predict what comes next in stories and poems.
* Connect combinations of letters with sounds.
* Recognize simple words in print.
* Sum up what a story is about.
* Write individual letters of the alphabet.
* Write words.
* Write simple sentences.
* Read simple books.
* Write to communicate.

Children can take more than one of these steps at the same time. This list of steps, though, gives you a general idea of how your child will progress toward reading. (For more details, see Typical Language Accomplishments for Children, Birth to Age 6, page 38.)

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Talking and Listening

Scientists who study the brain have found out a great deal about how we learn. They have discovered that babies learn much more from the sights and sounds around them than we thought previously. You can help your baby by taking advantage of her hunger to learn.

Hearing you talk is your baby's very first step toward becoming a reader, because it helps her to love language and to learn words.

From the very beginning, babies try to imitate the sounds that they hear us make. They "read" the looks on our faces and our movements. That's why it is so important to talk, sing, smile, and gesture to your child. Hearing you talk is your baby's very first step toward becoming a reader, because it helps her to love language and to learn words. (See "Baby Talk," page 11.)

As your child grows older, continue talking with her. Ask her about the things she does. Ask her about the events and people in the stories you read together. Let her know you are listening carefully to what she says. By engaging her in talking and listening, you are also encouraging your child to think as she speaks. In addition, you are showing that you respect her knowledge and her ability to keep learning. (See "Chatting with Children," page 13.)

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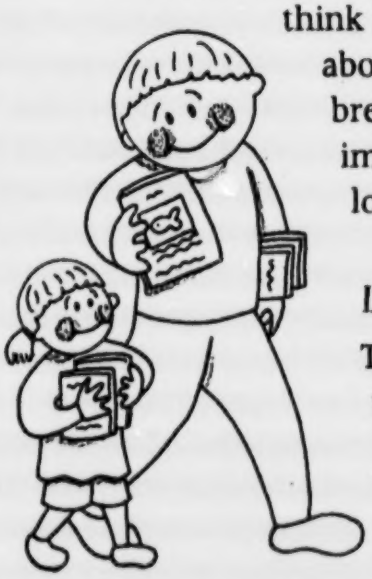
Reading Together

Imagine sitting your baby in your lap and reading a book to him for the first time. How different from just talking! Now you're showing him pictures. You point to them. In a lively way, you explain what the pictures are. You've just helped you child take the next step beyond talking. You've shown him that words and pictures connect. And you've started him on his way to understanding and enjoying books. While your child is still a baby, reading aloud to him should become part of your daily routine. Pick a quiet time, such as just before you put him to bed. This will give him a chance to rest between play and sleep. If you can, read with him in your lap or snuggled next to you so that he feels close and safe. As he gets older, he may need to move around some as you read to him. If he gets tired or restless, stop reading. Make reading aloud a quiet and comfortable time that your child looks forward to. Chances are very good that he will like reading all the more because of it.

Try to spend at least 30 minutes each day reading to and with your child. At first, read for no more than a few minutes at a time, several times a day. As your child grows older, you should be able to tell if he wants you to read for longer periods. Don't be discouraged if you have to skip a day or don't always keep to your schedule. Just get back to your daily routine as soon as you can. Most of all, make sure that reading stays fun for both of you!

What Does It Mean?

From the earliest days, talk with your child about what you are reading. You might point to pictures and name what is in them. When he is ready, have him do the same. Ask him, for example, if he can find the little mouse in the picture, or do whatever is fun and right for the book. Later on, as you read stories, read slowly and stop now and then to think aloud about what you've read. From the time your child is able to talk, ask him such questions about the story as, "What do you think will happen next?" or "Do you know what a palace is?" Answer his questions and, if you think he doesn't understand something, stop and talk more about what he asked. Don't worry if you occasionally break the flow of a story to make clear something that is important. However, don't stop so often that the child loses track of what is happening in the story.



Look for Books!

The books that you pick to read with your child are very important. If you aren't sure of what books are right for your child, ask a librarian to help you choose titles. (For more information on what libraries have to offer, see "Visiting the Library," page 27.)

Introduce your child to books when she is a baby. Let her hold and play with books made just for babies: board books with study cardboard covers and thick pages; cloth books that are soft and washable, touch-and-feel books, or lift-the-flap books that contain surprises for your baby to discover. Choose books with covers that have big, simple pictures of things that she sees every day. Don't be upset if at first your child chews or throws a book. Be patient. Cuddling with the child as you point to and talk with

great excitement about the book's pictures will soon capture her interest. When your baby becomes a toddler, she will enjoy helping to choose books for you to read to her.

As your child grows into a preschooler and kindergartner, the two of you can look for books that have longer stories and more words on the pages. Also look for books that have repeating words and phrases that she can begin to read or recognize when she sees them. By early first grade, add to this mix some books designed for beginning readers, including some books that have chapters and some books that show photographs and provide true information rather than make-believe stories.

Choose books with covers that have big, simple pictures of things that she sees every day.

Keep in mind that young children most often enjoy books about people, places, and things that are like those they know. The books can be about where you live or about parts of your culture, such as your religion, your holidays, or the way that you dress. If your child has special interests, such as dinosaurs or ballerinas, look for books about those interests.

From your child's toddler years through early first grade, you also should look for books of poems and rhymes. Remember when your baby heard your talking sounds and tried to imitate them? Rhymes are an extension of that language skill. By hearing and saying rhymes, along with repeated words and phrases, your child learns about spoken sounds and about words. Rhymes also spark a child's excitement about what comes next, which adds fun and adventure to reading. (For rhyming activities, see "Rhyme with Me: It's Fun, You'll See!" page 20.)

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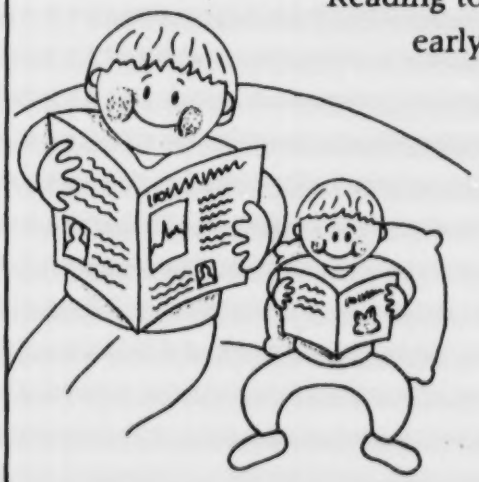
Show Your Child That You Read

When you take your child to the library, check out a book for yourself. Then set a good example by letting your child see you reading for yourself. Ask your child to get one of her books and sit with you as you read your book, magazine, or newspaper. Don't worry if you feel uncomfortable with your own reading ability. It's the reading that counts. When your child sees that reading is important to you, she may decide that it is important to her, too. (For ideas on how to help your child love books, see "A Home for My Books," page 18.)

Learning about Print and Books



Reading together is a perfect time to help a late toddler or early preschooler learn what print is. As you read aloud, stop now and then and point to letters and words; then point to the pictures they stand for. Your child will begin to understand that the letters form words and that words name pictures. He will also start to learn that each letter has its own sound—one of the most important things your child can know when learning to read.

By the time children are 4, most have begun to understand that printed words have meaning. By age 5, most will begin to know that not just the story but the printed words themselves go from left to right. Many children will even start to identify some capital and small letters and simple words. (For some ideas on learning letters, see "As Simple as ABC," page 14.)

In late kindergarten or early first grade, your child may want to read on his own. Let him! But be sure that he wants to do it. Reading should be something he is proud of and eager to do and not a lesson.

How Does a Book Work?

Children are fascinated by how books look and feel. They see how easily you handle and read books, and they want to do the same. When your toddler watches you handle books, she begins to learn that a book is for reading, not tearing or tossing around. Before she is 3, she may even pick one up and pretend to read, an important sign that she is beginning to know what a book is for. As your child becomes a preschooler, she is learning that

When your toddler watches you handle books, she begins to learn that a book is for reading.

- A book has a front cover.
- A book has a beginning and an end.
- A book has pages.
- A page in a book has a top and a bottom.
- You turn pages one at a time to follow the story.
- You read a story from left to right of a page.

As you read with your 4– or 5–year-old, begin to remind her about these things. Read the title on the cover. Talk about the picture on the cover. Point to the place where the story starts and, later, where it ends. Let your child help turn the pages. When you start a new page, point to where the words of the story continue and keep following the words by moving your finger beneath them. It takes time for a child to learn these things, but when your child does learn them, she has solved some of reading's mysteries.

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Early Efforts To Write

Writing and reading go hand in hand. As your child is learning one, he is learning the other. You can do certain things to make sure that he gets every opportunity to practice both. When he is about 2 years old, for example, give your child crayons and paper and encourage him to draw and scribble. He will have fun choosing which colors to use and which shapes to make. As he holds and moves the crayons, he will also develop muscle control. When he is a late toddler or early preschooler, he will become as eager to write as he is to read. (For more ideas on how to encourage your child's desire to write, see "As Simple as ABC," page 14, and "Write On!" page 25.)

Your preschool child's scribbles or drawings are his first writing. He will soon begin to write the alphabet letters. Writing the letters helps your child learn about their different sounds. His very early learning about letters and sounds gives him ideas about how to begin spelling words. When he begins writing words, don't worry that he doesn't spell them correctly. Instead, praise him for his efforts! In fact, if you look closely, you'll see that he's made a pretty good try at spelling a word for the first time. Later on, with help from teachers (and from you), he will learn the right way to spell words. For the moment, however, he has taken a great step toward being a writer.

Reading in Another Language

If your child's first language is not English, she can still become an excellent English reader and writer. She is on her way to successful English reading if she is beginning to learn many words and is interested in learning to read in her first language. You can help by supporting her in her first language as she learns English. Talk with her, read with her, encourage her to draw and write. In other words, do the same kinds of activities just discussed, but do them in your child's first language.

When your child first enters school, talk with her teacher. Teachers welcome such talks. They even have sign-up times early in the year, though usually you may ask for a meeting at any time. If you feel that you need some support in meeting with the teacher, ask a relative, neighbor, or someone else in your community to go with you.

When you do meet, tell the teacher the things that you are doing at home to strengthen your child's speaking and reading in her own language. Let the teacher know how important you child's reading is to you and ask for support for your efforts. Children who can switch back and forth between languages have accomplished something special. They should be praised and encouraged as they work for this achievement.

For a list of multiple-language books, see Resources for Children, page 51.

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Activities

What follows are ideas for language-building activities that you can do with your child to help her build the skills she needs to become a reader. Most public libraries offer free use of books, magazines, videos, computers, and other services. Other things that you might need for these activities are not expensive.

For each set of activities, we give an age span that suggests when children should try them. From one activity to the next, we continue to talk about children at different stages: babies (birth to 1 year), toddlers (1 to 3 years), preschoolers (ages 3 and 4), and kindergartner/early first-graders (ages 5 and 6). Remember that children don't always learn the same things at the same rate. And they don't suddenly stop doing one thing and start doing another just because they are a little older. So use the ages as guides as your child learns and grows. Don't consider them to be hard and fast rules.

You'll see that your role in the activities will change, too. Just as you hold up your child when he's learning to walk, you will help him a lot when he's taking his first language steps. As he grows, you will gradually let go, and he will take more and more language steps on his own. That is why in most of the activities we say, "The first activities . . . work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more."

As a parent, you can help your child want to learn in a way no one else can. That desire to learn is a key to your child's later success. Enjoyment is important! So, if you and your child don't enjoy one activity, move on to another. You can always return to any activity later on.

Baby Talk

For babies from birth to 1 year

Babies love hearing your voice. When you answer your child's sounds with sounds of your own, she learns that what she "says" has meaning and is important to you.

What to Do

- Talk to your baby often. Answer her coos, gurgles, and smiles. Talk, touch, and smile back. Get her to look at you.
- Play simple talking and touching games with your baby. Ask, "Where's your nose?" Then touch her nose and say playfully, "There's your nose!" Do this several times, then switch to an ear or knee or tummy. Stop when she (or you) grows tired of the game.
- Change the game by touching the nose or ear and repeating the word for it several times. Do this with objects, too. When she hears you name something over and over again, your child begins to connect the sound with what it means.
- Do things that interest your baby. Vary your tone of voice, make funny faces, sing lullabies, and recite simple nursery rhymes. Play "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake" with her.

It's so important to talk to your baby! With your help, her coos and gurgles will one day give way to words.

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Books and Babies

For babies from age 6 weeks to 1 year

Sharing books is a way to have fun with your baby and to start him on the road to becoming a reader.

What You Need

Cardboard or cloth books with large, simple pictures of things with which babies are familiar

Lift-the-flap, touch-and-feel, or peek-through play books (For suggestions, see Resources for Children, page 51.)

What to Do

Read to your baby for short periods several times a day. Bedtime is always a good time, but you can read at other times as well—while you're in the park, on the bus, or even at the breakfast table (without the food!).

As you read, point out things in the pictures. Name them as you point to them.

Give your baby sturdy books to look at, touch, and hold. Allow him to peek through the holes or lift the flaps to discover surprises.

Babies soon recognize the faces and voices of those who care for them. As you read to your baby, he will begin to connect books with what he loves most—your voice and closeness.

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Chatting with Children

For children ages 1 to 6

Continue talking with your older child as you did with your baby. Talking helps him to develop language skills and lets him know that what he says is important.

What to Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. However, keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

- Talk often with your toddler. When feeding, bathing, and dressing him, ask him to name or find different objects or clothing. Point out colors, sizes, and shapes.
- Talk with your child as you read together. Point to pictures and name what is in them. When he is ready, ask him to do the same. Ask him about his favorite parts of the story, and answer his questions about events or characters.
- Teach your toddler to be a helper by asking him to find things. As you cook, give him pots and pans or measuring spoons to play with. Ask him what he is doing and answer his questions.
- Whatever you do together, talk about it with your child. When you eat meals, take walks, go to the store, or visit the library, talk with him. These and other activities give the two of you a chance to ask and answer questions such as, "Which flowers are red? Which are yellow?" "What else do you see in the garden?" Challenge your child by asking questions that need more than a "yes" or "no" answer.

Talking and having conversations with your child play a necessary part in helping his language skills grow.

* Listen to your child's questions patiently and answer them just as patiently. If you don't know the answer to a question, have him join you as you look for the answer in a book. He will then see how important books are as sources of information.
* Have your child tell you a story. Then ask him questions, explaining that you need to understand better.
* When he is able, ask him to help you in the kitchen. He might set the table or decorate a batch of cookies. A first-grader may enjoy helping you follow a simple recipe. Talk about what you're fixing, what you're cooking with, what he likes to eat, and more.
* Ask yourself if the TV is on too much. If so, turn it off and talk!

As Simple as ABC

For children ages 2 to 6

Sharing the alphabet with your child helps her begin to recognize the shapes of letters and to link them with the sounds of spoken language. She will soon learn the difference between individual letters—what they look like and what they sound like.

What You Need

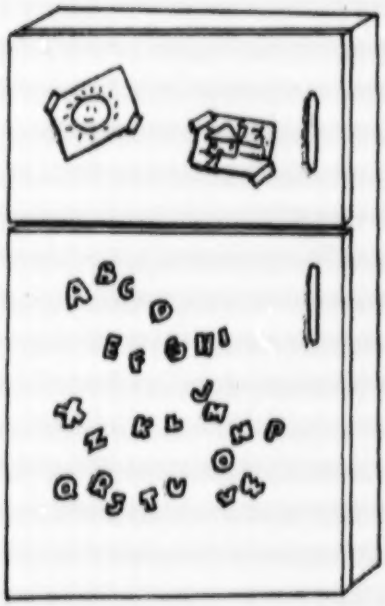
Alphabet books (see Resources for Children, page 51)
ABC magnets
Paper, pencils, crayons, markers
Glue and safety scissors

What to Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let her do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as she enjoys them.

* With your toddler sitting with you, print the letters of her name on paper and say each letter as you write it. Make a name sign for her room or other special place. Have her decorate the sign by pasting stickers or drawing on it.
* Teach your child "The Alphabet Song" and play games with her using the alphabet. Some alphabet books have songs and games that you can learn together.

When you show your child letters and words over and over again, she will identify and use them more easily when learning to read and write. She will be eager to learn when the letters and words are connected to things that are part of her life.



* Look for educational videos, DVDs, CDs, and TV shows such as "Between the Lions" that feature letter-learning activities for young children. Watch such programs with your child and join in with her on the rhymes and songs.
* Place alphabet magnets on your refrigerator or on another smooth, safe metal surface. Ask your child to name the letters she plays with and to say the words she may be trying to spell.

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* Wherever you are with your child, point out individual letters in signs, billboards, posters, food containers, books, and magazines. When she is 3 to 4 years old, ask her to begin finding and naming some letters.
* When your child is between ages 3 and 4, encourage her to spell and write her name. For many children, their names are the first words they write. At first, your child may use just one or two letters for her name (for example, Emily, nicknamed Em, uses the letter M).
* Make an alphabet book with your kindergartner. Have her draw pictures (you can help). You can also cut pictures from magazines or use photos. Paste each picture in the book. Help your child to write next to the picture the letter that stands for the object or person in the picture (for example, B for bird, M for milk, and so on).

What Happens Next? For children ages 2 to 6

Books with words or actions that appear over and over help your child to predict or tell what happens next. These are called "predictable" books. Your child will love to figure out the story in a predictable book!

What You Need

Predictable books with repeated words, phrases, questions, or rhymes
(For suggested titles, see Resources for Children, page 51.)

What to Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

* Read predictable books to your child. Teach him to hear and say repeating words, such as names for colors, numbers, letters, and animals.
* Pick a story that has repeated phrases, such as this example from *The Three Little Pigs:*

Wolf Voice: *Little pig, little pig, let me come in.*
Little Pig: *Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin!*
Wolf Voice: *Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in!*

Your child will learn the repeated phrase and have fun joining in with you each time it shows up in the story. Pretty soon, he will join in before you tell him.

* Read books that give hints about what might happen next. Such books have your child lifting flaps, looking through cut-out holes in the pages, "reading" small pictures that stand for words (called "rebuses"), and searching for many other clues. Get excited along with your child as he hurries to find out what happens next.

Predictable books help children to understand how stories progress. A child easily learns familiar phrases and repeats them, pretending to read. Pretend reading gives a child a sense of power and the courage to keep trying.

* When reading predictable books, ask your child what he thinks will happen. See if he points out picture clues, if he mentions specific words or phrases, or if he connects the story to something that happens in real life. These are important skills for a beginning reader to learn.

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A Home for My Books

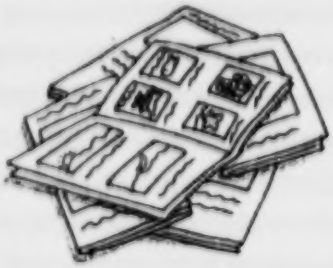
For children ages 2 to 6

Starting a home library for your child shows her how important books are. Having books of her own in a special place boosts the chance that your child will want to read even more.

What You Need

Books from bookstores, garage sales, flea markets, used book stores, and sales at your local library.

A bookcase, a cardboard box, or other materials to make a place for books.



What to Do

* Pick a special place for your child's books so that she knows where to look for them. A cardboard box that you can decorate together might make a good bookcase. Or you might clear one of the family bookshelves and make a special place for her to put her books.
* Help your child to arrange her books in some order—her favorite books, books about animals, holiday books. Use whatever method will help her most easily find the book she's looking for.
* Borrow books from your local library. (See "Visiting the Library," page 27.) Go to the children's section and spend time with your child reading and selecting books to take home and put in her special place. You might even have a box or space just for library books, so that they don't get mixed up with your child's own books.

When collecting and reading books are a part of family life, you send your child a message that books are important, enjoyable, and full of new things to learn.

- Encourage family members and friends to give books to your child as presents for birthdays and other occasions.
- When you and your child make your own books, you can add them to your home library. (For ideas on how to make books, see "As Simple as ABC," page 14, and "Write On!" page 25.)

A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words

For children ages 3 to 6

Books that have no words, just beautiful pictures, invite you and your child to use your imaginations to make up your own stories to go with the pictures.

What You Need

Wordless picture books (For suggestions, see Resources for Children, page 51.)
Old magazines
Safety scissors
Construction paper

What to Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

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Using wordless picture books can help improve children's language skills and spark their imaginations.

* Look through the whole picture book with your child. Ask him what he thinks the story is about. Tell the story together by talking about each page as each of you sees it.
* Ask your child to identify objects, animals, or people on each page. Talk with him about the pictures, and ask him if he thinks that they are like real life.
* Have your child tell another child or family member a story using a wordless picture book. Doing this will make him feel like a "reader" and will encourage him to continue learning to read.
* Have your child create his own picture book with his drawings or pictures that you help him cut from magazines.

Rhyme with Me: It's Fun, You'll See!

For children ages 3 to 6

Rhyming activities help your child to pay attention to the sounds in words.

What You Need

Books with rhyming words, word games, or songs.

What to Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let her do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as she enjoys them.

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- Play rhyming games and sing rhyming songs with your child. Many songs and games include clapping, bouncing and tossing balls, and playing in groups.
- Read rhymes to your child. As you read, stop before a rhyming word and encourage your child to fill in the blank. When she does, praise her.
- Listen for rhymes in songs that you know or hear on the radio, TV, or at family or other gatherings. Sing the songs with your child.
- Around the home, point to objects and say their names, for example, clock. Then ask your child to say as many words as she can that rhyme with the name. Other easily rhymed words are ball, bed, rug, sink, and toy. Let your child use some silly, or nonsense, words as well: toy—*joy, boy, woy, loy, doy, hoy, noy*.
- Say three words such as *go, dog, and frog,* and ask your child which words sound the same—rhyme.
- If your child has an easy-to-rhyme name, ask her to say words that rhyme with it: *Jill—bill, mill, fill, hill.*
- If a computer is available, encourage your child to use it to play rhyming games. (For computer game suggestions, see "Learning with Computers," page 29.)

Children around the world have fun with rhyming games and songs. Here are a few rhyming books to look for: *Shake It to the One That You Love the Best: Play Songs and Lullabies from Black Musical Traditions* by Cheryl Warren Mattox; *Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young* by Jack Prelutsky; Diez Deditos: *10 Little Fingers and Other Play Rhymes and Action Songs from Latin America* by Jose-Luis Orozco; and *My Very First Mother Goose* by Iona Opie. (For more suggestions, see Resources for Children, page 51.)

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Match My Sounds

For children ages 3 to 6

Listening for and saying sounds in words will help your child to learn that spoken words are made up of sounds, which gets him ready to match spoken sounds to written letters—an important first step toward becoming a reader.

What You Need

Books with nursery rhymes, tongue twisters, word games, or silly songs.

Helping children learn to pay attention to sounds in words can prevent reading problems later on.

What to Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

- Say your child's name, then have him say words that begin with the same sound; for example: ***David—day, doll, dish; Jess—juice, jam, jar.***
- As you read a story or poem, ask your child to listen for and say the words that begin with the same sound. Then have him think of and say another word that begins with the sound.
- Read or say a familiar nursery rhyme such as "Humpty, Dumpty." Then have your child make it "Bumpty, Lumpty" or "Thumpty, Gumpty."
- Help your child to make up and say silly lines with lots of words that start with the same sound, such as, "Sister saw six silly snakes."
- Say two names for an animal, and tell your child to choose the name that begins with the same sound as the animal's name. Ask, for example, should a horse's name be Hank or Tank? Should a pig be Mattie or Patty? Should a zebra be Zap or Cap?

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Take a Bow! For children ages 3 to 6

When your child acts out a poem or story, she shows her own understanding of what it is about. She also grows as a reader by connecting emotions with written words.

What You Need

Poems or stories written from a child's point of view.

Things to use in a child's play (dress-up clothes, puppets).

Play acting helps a child learn that there are more and less important parts to a story. She also learns how one thing in a story follows another.

What to Do

* Read a poem slowly to your child. Read it with feeling, making the words seem important.
* If your child has a poem she especially likes, ask her to act it out. Ask her to make a face to show the way the character in the poem is feeling. Making different faces adds emotion to the performer's voice. After her performance, praise her for doing a good job.
* Tell your child that the family would love to see her perform her poem. Set a time when everyone can be together. When your child finishes her performance, encourage her to take a bow as everyone claps and cheers loudly.
* Encourage your child to make up her own play from a story that she has read or heard. Tell her that it can be make-believe or from real life. Help her to find or make things to go with the story—a pretend crown, stuffed animals, a broomstick, or whatever the story needs. Some of her friends or family also can help. You can write down the words or, if she is old enough, help her to write them. Then help her to stage the play for everyone to see!

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Family Stories

For children ages 3 to 6

Telling family stories lets your child know about the people who are important to him. They also give him an idea of how one thing leads to another in a story.

What to Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let him do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as he enjoys them.

- Tell your child stories about your parents and grandparents or about others who are special to you and your family. You might put these stories in a book and add old photographs.
- Think out loud about when you were little. Make a story out of something that happened, such as a family trip, a birthday party, or when you lost your first tooth.
- Have your child tell you stories about what he did on special days, such as holidays, birthdays, and family vacations.
- If you go on a trip, write a trip journal with your child to make a new family story. Take photographs of special events. Writing down special events and pasting photographs of the events in the journal will tie the family story to a written history. You can also include everyday trips, such as going to the grocery store or the park.

The storyteller's voice helps your child to hear the sounds of words and how they are put together to make meaning.

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Write On!

For children ages 3 to 6

Reading and writing support each other. The more your child does of each, the better she will be at both.

What You Need

Pencils, crayons, or markers
Yarn or ribbon
Writing paper or notebook
Cardboard or heavy paper
Construction paper
Safety scissors

What to Do

The first activities in the list below work well with younger children. As your child grows older, the later activities let her do more. But keep doing the first ones as long as she enjoys them.

* Write with your child. She will learn a lot about writing by watching you write. Talk with her about your writing so that she begins to understand that writing means something and has many uses.
* Have your preschooler use her way of writing—perhaps just a scribble—to sign birthday cards or make lists.
* Hang a family message board in the kitchen. Offer to write notes there for your child. Be sure that she finds notes left there for her.
* Ask your preschooler to tell you simple stories as you write them down. Question her if you don't understand something.

- Encourage your preschooler to write her name and practice writing it with her. Remember, at first she may use only the first letter or two of her name.
- Help your child write notes or e-mails to relatives and friends to thank them for gifts or to share her thoughts. Encourage the relatives and friends to answer your child.
- When she is in kindergarten, your child will begin to write words the way that she hears them. For example, she might write *haf* for *have*, *frn* for *friend*, and *Frd* for *Fred*. Ask her to read her writing to you. Don't be concerned with correct spelling. She will learn that later.
- As your child gets older, she can begin to write or tell you longer stories. Ask questions that will help her organize the stories. Answer questions about alphabet letters and spelling.
- Turn your child's writing into books. Paste her drawings and writings on pieces of construction paper. For each book, make a cover out of heavier paper or cardboard, then add special art, a title, and her name as author. Punch holes in the pages and cover and bind the book together with yarn or ribbon.

All of the activities discussed so far offer a rich experience for children as they build their language skills. But you can do even more to support your child's learning.

When a child is just beginning, she tries different ways to write and spell. Our job as parents is to encourage our children's writing so they will enjoy putting their thoughts and ideas on paper. Provide them with spelling help when they ask for it.

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Visiting the Library

Libraries offer more than books. They are places of learning and discovery for everyone. Ask at the library about getting a library card in your child's name and, if you don't already have one, get a card for yourself.

The Librarian

Introduce yourself and your child to your librarian. Librarians can help you to select the best books that are both fun and suitable for your child's age level. They can also show you the other programs and services the library has to offer.

Books . . . and More

In addition to a wealth of books, your library most likely will have tapes and CDs of books, musical CDs and tapes, movies, computers that you can use, and many more resources. You also might find books in languages other than English, or programs to help adults improve their reading. If you would like reading help for yourself or your family, check with the librarian about literacy programs in your community. (Also see Resources for Parents and Caregivers, page 42.)

Supervised Story Times

Babies and toddlers. Many libraries have group story hours that are short and geared to the attention spans of the children. During story hour, child sits in your lap, and both of you can join in the story. The storyteller also may show you fingerplays and rhythm activities. The storyteller also may give you tips and handouts that you can use for your own home story hours.

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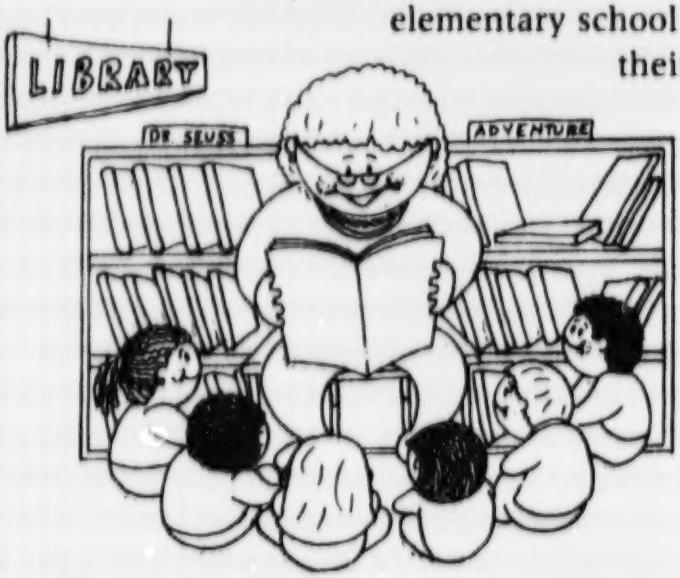
Preschoolers. The library may offer these story hours more than once a week. For these story hours, you and your child usually read several books on the same topic. You might play games, sing songs, use puppets, or do other activities that are connected to that topic. You also may get ideas for books to read and other things to do with your child at home.

Families. Families can read together, or they may join in a story told by the library storyteller. Some libraries also set up family activities around the readings, including crafts and art projects and watching movies.

Summer Reading

After the school year is over, some children may forget what they have learned about reading. Libraries help keep children interested in reading by offering summer programs. Children from early elementary school to high school read books on their own. A teacher or librarian may give a child a diary or log in which he writes what he read during the summer. And, because reading aloud is so important to promoting a love of reading, many libraries offer "Read-to-Me" clubs for preschool and younger children.



Learning with Computers

Computers can't replace the reading and writing activities discussed earlier in this booklet. But computers can support what these activities teach your child.

Many computer programs (also called software) offer activities that can both grab your child's interest and teach good lessons. Children as young as 3 years old, though they can't read yet, may still have fun using some of the colorful, action-filled programs with enjoyable characters. (For computer program ideas, see Resources for Children, page 51.) Computer reading programs let your child:

- Hear stories, read along and read by herself.
- Play with objects and characters on the screen that teach the alphabet, simple words, rhyming words and other skills important to learning to read.
- Command the computer with her voice, record herself reading and play back the recording so that she can hear herself.
- Write simple sentences and make up stories.
- Add pictures and characters to her stories and have them read back.
- Make and print her own books.
- Make slide shows.
- Gain praise and see improvement in her language abilities.

Finding and Using a Computer

If you don't have a computer at home, ask your librarian if you and your child may use one of the library's computers. Your child's school or a nearby community college might also have a computer laboratory that you may use. Ask your librarian about good programs for learning to use a computer. Try a few. They can help you learn basic computer steps before working with your child. Your librarian also may be able to tell you where you can get computer training if you want it.

When sitting at a computer with your child, join in at first. Later, watch as he plays. Always praise and guide him when you need to.

When sitting at a computer with your child, join in at first. Later, watch as he plays. Always praise and guide him when you need to. Make sure that you choose the right programs for your child's age. Often, one program may have activities for many ages. As your child grows, the program gets more challenging. In fact, if you have children of different ages, the same program can allow each to learn and practice different skills.

There are many computer programs available for children, but they vary in quality. If you can, try a program before you buy it. You also can check at your local library for reviews of children's programs. Don't hesitate to ask your librarian or your child's teacher for information and recommendations about good software.

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Many computer programs are available through "Web sites," which are addresses on the World Wide Web, a part of the Internet. Organizations such as libraries, colleges, and government offices give people information through their Web sites. Businesses and other private groups also give—and sell—information over their Web sites. Good children's programs are available this way, but again, the quality of such material varies and you will need to be careful in your choices. For help on how you can use a computer to hook up to the Internet and find what you need, check with your librarian.

Some Useful Computer Resources

Parents Guide to the Internet published by the U.S. Department of Education, 1997. (call toll-free 1–877–4ED–PUBS to request a free copy, or order online at http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html).

The Connected Family: Bridging the Digital Generation Gap by Seymour Papert and Nicholas Negroponte. Longstreet Press, 1996.

The Parents' Pocket Guide to Kids and Computers published by the Family Computer Workshop, 1998.

Young Kids and Computers: A Parent's Survival Guide by Ellen Wolock, Anne Orr, and Warren Buckleitner. Children's Software Revue, 1998.

For more resources, see "Some Other Informative Web Sites for Parents and Caregivers, page" 42; "Computer Programs," page 57; and "Young Children and the Internet: Places to Learn and Play," page 58.

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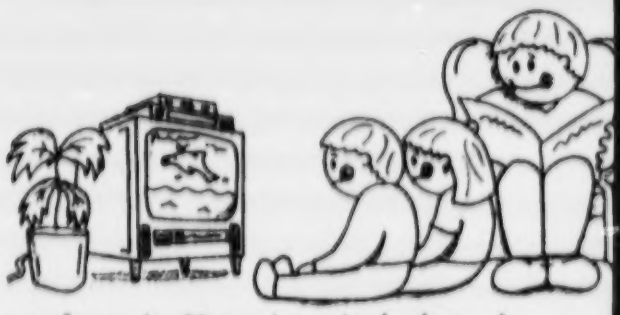

Taking Charge of TV

Many children enjoy TV, and they can learn from it. Keep in mind, though, that young children often imitate what they see, good or bad. It's up to you to decide how much TV and what kinds of shows your child should watch.

- Think about your child's age and choose the types of things that you want him to see, learn, and imitate.
- Look for TV shows that
  - teach your child something,
  - hold his interest,
  - encourage him to listen and question,
  - help him learn more words,
  - make him feel good about himself, and
  - introduce him to new ideas and things.
- "Sesame Street," "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," "Blue's Clues," "Between the Lions," "Reading Rainbow," "Barney & Friends," "Zoom," and "Zoboomafoo," are some shows that you may want to consider. Many other good children's programs are available on public television stations and on cable channels such as the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon.
- Limit the time that you let your child watch TV. Too much television cuts into important activities in a child's life, such as reading, playing with friends, and talking with family members.
- Watch TV with your child when you can. Talk with him about what you see. Answer his questions. Try to point out the things in TV programs that are like your child's everyday life.
- When you can't watch TV with your child, spot check to see what he is watching. Ask questions after the show ends. See what excites him and what troubles him. Find out what he has learned and remembered.
- Go to the library and find books that explore the themes of the TV shows that your child watches. Or help your child to use his drawings or pictures cut from magazines to make a book based on a TV show.

If You Think There's a Problem

Your child may resist being read to or joining with you in the activities in this booklet. If so, keep trying the activities, but keep them playful. Remember that children vary a great deal in the ways that they learn. Don't be concerned if your child doesn't enjoy a certain activity that her friend of the same age loves. It is important, though, to keep an eye on how your child is progressing. (See the box, "Watching Your Child Progress.")

When a child is having a language or reading problem, the reason might be simple to understand and deal with or it might be complicated and require expert help. Often, children may just need more time to develop their language skills. On the other hand, some children might have trouble seeing, hearing, or speaking. Others may have a learning disability. If you think your child may have some kind of physical or learning problem, it is important to get expert help quickly.

If your child is in school and you think that she should have stronger language skills, ask for a private meeting with her teacher. (You may feel more comfortable taking a friend, relative, or someone else in your community with you.) In most cases, the teacher or perhaps the principal will be able to help you to understand how your child is doing and what you might do to help her.

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There is a law—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—that may allow you to get certain services for your child from your school district. Your child might qualify to receive help from a speech and language therapist or other specialist, or she might qualify to receive materials designed to match her needs. You can learn about your special education rights and responsibilities by requesting that the school give you— in your first language—a summary of legal rights. To find out about programs for children with disabilities that are available in your state, contact the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities.(See Resources for Parents and Caregivers, page 42, for the address and phone number and for other resources.)

Parents, teachers, and other professionals can work together to determine if a child has a learning disability or other problem, and then provide the right help as soon as possible.

The good news is that no matter how long it takes, most children can learn to read. Parents, teachers, and other professionals can work together to determine if a child has a learning disability or other problem, and then provide the right help as soon as possible. When a child gets such help, chances are very good that she will develop the skills she needs to succeed in school and in life. ***Nothing is more important than your support for your child as she goes through school. Make sure she gets any extra help she needs as soon as possible, and always encourage her and praise her efforts.***

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Watching Your Child Progress

As a parent, you can learn a lot about your child's learning and watch for signs of possible problems. Here are some things to look for and to discuss with his teacher:

* Starting at age 3 or 4: Does your child remember nursery rhymes, and can he play rhyming games?

* At about age 4: Can your child get information or directions from conversations or books that are read aloud to him?

* Kindergartners: Is your child beginning to name and write the letters and numbers that he sees in books, on billboards and signs, and in other places?

* At age 5: Can your child play and enjoy simple word games in which two or more words start with the same sound? For example: "Name all the animals you can think of that start with d."

* At ages 5 and 6: Does your child show that he understands that spoken words can be broken down into smaller parts (for example, by noticing the word big in bigger)? Does he seem to understand that you can change a small part of a word and make a different word (for example, by changing the first sound and letter of cat, you can make hat, sat, mat, bat, rat, and so on)?

(Adapted from *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*. National Academy Press, Washington, DC: 1999. For the complete reference, see the Bibliography.)

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A Reading Checklist

There are many ways that you can encourage your child to become a reader. Here are some questions that you can ask yourself to make sure that you are keeping on track:

For Babies (6 weeks to 1 year)

* Do I provide a comfortable place for our story time? Is my child happy to be in this place?
* Am I showing my child the pictures in the book? Am I changing the tone of my voice as I read to show emotion and excitement?
* Am I paying attention to how my child responds? What does she especially like? Is she tired and ready to stop?

For Toddlers (1 to 3 years)

All of the questions above, plus:

* Does my child enjoy the book we are reading?
* Do I encourage my child to "pretend read," joining in where he has memorized a word or phrase?
* When I ask questions, am I giving my child enough time to think and answer?
* Do I tie ideas in the book to things that are familiar to my child? Do I notice if he does this on his own?
* Do I let my child know how much I like his ideas and encourage him to tell me more?
* Do I point out letters, such as the first letter of his name?

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For Preschoolers (3 and 4 years)

All of the questions above, plus:

* Do I find ways to help my child begin to identify sounds and letters and to make letter-sound matches?

For Kindergartners (5 years):

All of the questions above, plus:

* Do I find ways to help my child begin to identify some printed words?
* Do I let my child retell favorite stories to show that she knows how the story develops and what's in it?

For Beginning First-Graders (6 years):

All of the questions above, plus:

* Do I give my child the chance to read a story to me using the print, picture clues, his memory—or any combination of these ways that help him make sense of the story?

Remember: Children learn step by step in a process that takes time and patience. They vary a great deal in what holds their interest and in the rate at which they make progress.

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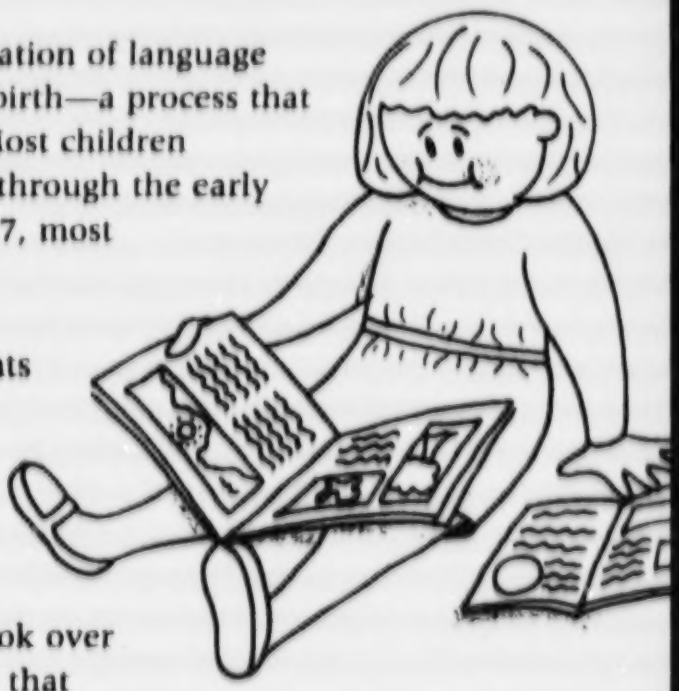
Typical Language Accomplishments

for Children, Birth to Age 6



Learning to read is built on a foundation of language skills that children start to learn at birth—a process that is both complicated and amazing. Most children develop certain skills as they move through the early stages of learning language. By age 7, most children are reading.

The following list of accomplishments is based on current scientific research in the fields of reading, early childhood education, and child development.* Studies continue in their fields, and there is still much still to learn. As you look over the accomplishments, keep in mind that children vary a great deal in how they develop and learn. If you have questions or concerns about your child's progress, talk with the child's doctor, teacher, or a speech and language therapist. For children with any kind of disability or learning problem, the sooner they can get the special help they need, the easier it will be for them to learn.

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* Based on information from *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, a report of the National Research Council, by the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, 1998; and from the *Joint Position Statement of the International Reading Association (IRA)* and the *National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)*, 1998. For the complete references, see the Bibliography.

From birth to age 3, most babies and toddlers become able to:

- Make sounds that imitate the tones and rhythms that adults use when talking.
- Respond to gestures and facial expressions.
- Begin to associate words they hear frequently with what the words mean.
- Make cooing, babbling sounds in the crib, which gives way to enjoying rhyming and nonsense word games with a parent or caregiver.
- Play along in games such as "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake."
- Handle objects such as board books and alphabet blocks in their play.
- Recognize certain books by their covers.
- Pretend to read books.
- Understand how books should be handled.
- Share books with an adult as a routine part of life.
- Name some objects in a book.
- Talk about characters in books.
- Look at pictures in books and realize they are symbols of real things.
- Listen to stories.
- Ask or demand that adults read or write with them.
- Begin to pay attention to specific print such as the first letters of their names.
- Scribble with a purpose (trying to write or draw something).
- Produce some letter-like forms and scribbles that resemble, in some way, writing.

From ages 3–4, most preschoolers become able to:

* Enjoy listening to and talking about storybooks.
* Understand that print carries a message.
* Make attempts to read and write.
* Identify familiar signs and labels.
* Participate in rhyming games.
* Identify some letters and make some letter-sound matches.
* Use known letters (or their best attempt to write the letters) to represent written language especially for meaningful words like their names or phrases such as "I love you."

At age 5, most kindergartners become able to:

* Sound as if they are reading when they pretend to read.
* Enjoy being read to.
* Retell simple stories.
* Use descriptive language to explain or to ask questions.
* Recognize letters and letter-sound matches.
* Show familiarity with rhyming and beginning sounds.
* Understand that print is read left-to-right and top-to-bottom.
* Begin to match spoken words with written ones.
* Begin to write letters of the alphabet and some words they use and hear often.
* Begin to write stories with some readable parts.

At age 6, most first-graders can:

* Read and retell familiar stories.
* Use a variety of ways to help with reading a story such as rereading, predicting what will happen, asking questions, or using visual cues or pictures.
* Decide on their own to use reading and writing for different purposes;
* Read some things aloud with ease.
* Identify new words by using letter-sound matches, parts of words and their understanding of the rest of a story or printed item.
* Identify an increasing number of words by sight.
* Sound out and represent major sounds in a word when trying to spell.
* Write about topics that mean a lot to them.
* Try to use some punctuation marks and capitalization.

Resources for Families and Caregivers

Federal Offices or Federally Funded Clearinghouses That Provide Information on Literacy and Learning

U.S. Department of Education (ED)

ACCESS ERIC

Toll Free: 1-800-LET-ERIC

http://www.eric.ed.gov/resources/parent/parent.html

Provides referrals to all ERIC clearinghouses. ERIC—the Educational Resources Information Center—is a national education information system supported by ED. ACCESS ERIC is the source for ERIC Parent Brochures series, including "How Can I Encourage My Young Child To Read?" Two ERIC Clearinghouses that deal specially with early childhood and literacy and language development are:

- ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education and the National Parent Information Network (NPIN) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (http://npin.org); and

- ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication at Indiana University at Bloomington (http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec).

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA)
University of Michigan School of Education
610 East University Avenue, Room 1600 SEB
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259
Phone: 734-647-6940
http://www.ciera.org

CIERA is the national research and development center on early childhood reading. It is funded by ED. CIERA's mission is to improve the reading achievement of America's children by developing and offering solutions to persistent problems in the learning and teaching of beginning reading.

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Even Start Family Literacy Program
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202
Toll Free: 1–800–USA–LEARN
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE /CEP
Even Start provides support for family-centered education projects to help parents learn the literacy and parenting skills they need to help their young children reach their full potential as learners. It makes grants to local education agencies, community-based organizations, and other nonprofit organizations. To find out about programs in your state, contact your state department of education or your local school district office.

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)
800 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006
Toll Free: 1–800–228–8813
http://www.nifl.gov
Jointly administered by the Secretaries of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services, NIFL is an independent federal institute. The NIFL Hotline is available 24 hours a day to provide free referrals for potential students and volunteers to outstanding programs in their area. Also provides free copies of current publications on literacy.

National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education
U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
555 New Jersey Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20208
Phone: 202–219–1935
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI/
Sponsors research that focuses on early childhood development and education, especially school readiness, child/adult relationships, and children's resilience.

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No Child Left Behind Parents Tool Box
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202
Toll Free: 1–888–814–NCLB
http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov/parents/index.html
Provides materials and information for parents and educators about the No Child Left Behind legislation and school improvement.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Early Head Start/Head Start Program
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children, Youth, and Families
Washington, DC 20202–0001
Phone: 202–205–8572 (or check directory for your regional HHS office)
http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/hsb/
Head Start programs nationwide provide comprehensive services for 3- to 5-year-old children of low-income families. Grants are made to public school systems and nonprofit organizations to fund services covering education, health care, family involvement, and social services. Early Head Start programs—modeled after Head Start—provide services to low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers. To find out about programs in your state, contact your state department of education or your local school district.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Clearinghouse
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 3006
Rockville, MD 20847
Toll Free: 1–800–370–2943
http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/publications.htm
Provides information about government-sponsored research on human development over the entire life span. Includes topics such as prenatal care, learning disabilities, AIDS, and mental retardation.

Private Organizations That Deal with Literacy and Reading

For information about adult and family literacy programs in your community, be sure to check at your local library. Other resources on literacy and reading include:

American Library Association (ALA)
Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC)
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
Toll Free: 1–800–545–2433, ext. 2163
http://www.ala.org/alsc/
ALA/ALSC sponsors "Born To Read," a program that builds partnerships between librarians and health care professionals to reach out to new and expectant "at-risk" parents to help them raise children who are "born to read." Publications and online resources include materials for parents, caregivers, and children.

International Reading Association (IRA)
800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714–8139
Phone: 302–731–1600
http://www.reading.org/
IRA is an organization of teachers, librarians, researchers, parents, and others dedicated to promoting high levels of literacy for all. Its Online Bookstore offers books, videos, and software for parents and caregivers.

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA)
635 James Street
Syracuse, NY 13202–2214
Phone: 315–472–0001
http://literacyvolunteers.org
LVA sponsors more than 350 community programs nationwide that offer free literacy help to adults and their families.

National Center for Family Literacy
Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200
325 West Main Street
Louisville, KY 40202–4251
Toll Free (Parade Family Literacy InfoLine): 1–877–326–5481
http://www.famlit.org
Parade Family Literacy InfoLine provides referrals for family literacy programs at the local level. Accessible 24 hours a day; operators are available 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday–Friday.

Reading Is Fundamental, Inc. (RIF)
P.O. Box 23444
Washington, DC 20026
Toll Free: 1–877–RIF–READ
http://www.rif.org/
Develops and delivers children and family literacy programs that help prepare young children for reading and motivate school-age children to read. Trains literacy providers, parents, and others to prepare all children to become lifelong readers.

Resources If Your Child Has a Reading Problem or Learning Disability

Federal or Federally Funded Clearinghouses

ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
Toll Free: 1–800–328–0272
http://www.ericec.org/
This clearinghouse provides research-based information on a variety of topics, including learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder (ADD), and behavior disorders.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Clearinghouse
Toll Free: 1–800–370–2943
http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/publications.htm
See a complete description under "Federal Offices or Federally Funded Clearinghouses That Provide Information on Literacy and Learning."

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013–1492
Toll Free: 1–800–695–0285 (voice & TTY)
http://www.nichcy.org
This clearinghouse provides referrals and information on disabilities and related issues for families, educators, and others, with a focus on children and youth (birth to age 22). Funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education—the federal office that administers the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Other Awareness and Advocacy Organizations

Learning Disabilities Association of America
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
Toll Free: 1–888–300–6710
http://www.ldanatl.org
This is a nonprofit volunteer organization advocating for individuals with learning disabilities. The association has more than 60,000 members and 600 state and local affiliates nationwide.

National Center for Learning Disabilities
381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1401
New York, NY 10016
Toll Free: 1–888–575–7373
http://www.ld.org
This is a national nonprofit organization that is committed to improving the lives of those affected by learning disabilities. Provides materials designed to increase public awareness and understanding.

Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities
c/o Communications Consortium Media Center
1200 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005–1754
Phone: 202–326–8700
http://www.ldonline.org/ccldinfo/
This is a collaboration of leading national learning disability organizations dedicated to improving awareness and understanding about the nature of learning disabilities.

Federal Source of Materials for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Library of Congress
Washington, DC 20542
Phone: 202–707–5100
http://www.loc.gov/nls/
This is a free national library program of Braille and recorded materials for blind and physically handicapped children and adults.

Books for Parents

The following books are just a few of the many excellent books on reading with children. Check with your librarian for titles of more books and for children's book lists.

Beaty, Janice J. ***Building Bridges with Multicultural Picture Books: For Children 3–5.*** Prentice–Hall, 1996. Contains a listing of selected multicultural picture books for young children. Includes activities to do with children that are based on the books listed.

Butler, Dorothy. ***Babies Need Books: Sharing the Joy of Books with Children from Birth to Six.*** Heinemann, 1998. Discusses the importance of reading to young children and gives summaries of books by age level.

Hall, Susan L., and Moats, Louisa C. ***Straight Talk about Reading: How Parents Can Make a Difference During the Early Years.*** NTC Publishing Group. 1998. Provides practical advice, games and activities, and lists of children's books and resources that parents can use to help their children read.

Muse, Daphne (Ed.). ***The New Press Guide to Multicultural Resources for Young Readers.*** The New Press, 1997. Includes reviews of hundreds of children's books from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Trelease, Jim. ***The Read-Aloud Handbook.*** Penguin, 2001. Discusses the importance of reading aloud to children. Includes a "Treasury of Read-Alouds"—hundreds of recommended books annotated by age and grade level.

Some Other Informative Web Sites for Parents and Caregivers

Children's Software Revue:
http://www.childrenssoftware.com/

Family Education Network:
http://www.familyeducation.com

Kidsource:
http://www.kidsource.com

Parent Soup:
http://www.parentsoup.com

Resources for Children

Here's a sampling of books, computer programs, and Web sites that you and your child can enjoy together. Check with your local librarian for more suggestions.

Babies

Brown, Margaret Wise. ***Goodnight Moon***. Harper Collins, 1997. A little rabbit says goodnight to all the things in his room and, finally, to the Moon.

Johnson, Angela. ***Mama Bird, Baby Birds***. Orchard, 1994. Joshua and his sister, two young African–American children, watch a mother bird feeding its babies.

Wells, Rosemary. ***Max's Bedtime***. Dial, 1998. Even though Max's sister offers him her stuffed animals, he cannot sleep without his red rubber elephant.

Play Books for Toddlers and Preschoolers

Carle, Eric. ***The Very Busy Spider***. Philomel, 1984. Farm animals try to keep a spider from spinning her web, but she doesn't give up and she makes a beautiful and useful creation. Pictures may be felt as well as seen, making this a great book for visually impaired children.

Hill, Eric. ***Where's Spot?*** Putnam, 1980. In an interactive lift-the-flap book, children help Spot's mother, Sally, search the house to find him. This book has been translated into a number of languages, including a sign language version.

Kunhardt, Dorothy. ***Pat the Bunny***. Golden Books, 1990. In this touch-and-feel book, Paul and Judy smell the flowers, feel Daddy's scratchy face, look in the mirror, play peek-a-boo, and, of course, pat the bunny.

Lacome, Julie. Seashore. ***Candlewick***, 1995. Small fingers can poke through the holes in the pages of this board book about the beach, and seem to change into fins, wings, or crawling legs.

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Alphabet Books for Preschoolers–First-Graders

Kitamura, Satoshi. ***From Acorn to Zoo and Everything in Between in Alphabetical Order.*** Sunburst, 1995. Each page shows an assortment of things that begin with the same letter—all clearly labeled. For each page there is a question (and a clue) that can be answered only by looking carefully at the picture.

MacDonald, Suse. ***Alphabatics.*** Bradbury Press, 1986. The letters of the alphabet are transformed and placed in 26 illustrations so that the hole in b becomes a balloon and y turns into the head of a yak (an ox with long hair).

Rankin, Laura. ***The Handmade Alphabet.*** Puffin, 1996. This book presents the handshape for each letter of the manual alphabet (American Sign Language) accompanied by an object whose name begins with that letter.

Shannon, George. ***Tomorrow's Alphabet.*** Mulberry Books, 1999. A is for seed—what's going on here? The seed is tomorrow's Apple! An imaginative alphabet puzzle that encourages children to think and make predictions.

Shelby, Anne. ***Potluck.*** Orchard, 1991. A multicultural collection of friends having names starting with A–Z bring a variety of dishes to a potluck.

Wordless Picture Books for Preschoolers–First-Graders

Carle, Eric. ***Do You Want to Be My Friend?*** HarperCollins, 1995. A little mouse asks all kinds of animals, "Do you want to be my friend?"

dePaola, Tomie. ***Pancakes for Breakfast.*** Voyager Books, 1990. A little old lady's attempts to have pancakes for breakfast are hindered by a lack of ingredients and the help of her pets.

Mayer, Mercer. ***A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog.*** Econo-Clad Books, 1999. A boy and a dog try unsuccessfully to catch a frog.

McCully, Emily. ***School***. HarperTrophy, 1990. The eight oldest mice in a family prepare for the first day of school. After everyone leaves, and the house is too quiet, the youngest mouse decides to go discover what school is all about.

Wiesner, David. ***Tuesday***. Clarion, 1991. One night a town is invaded by extraterrestrial frogs flying in on their lily pads.

Rhyming Books for Toddlers–Kindergartners

Christelow, Eileen. ***Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed***. Clarion, 1989. This counting rhyme shows five little monkeys getting ready for bed and getting sidetracked by some serious bed-jumping.

Cole, Joanna, and Calmenson, Stephanie. ***Eentsy, Weensty Spider: Fingerplays and Action Rhymes***. Morrow, 1991. This book, illustrated using children of diverse cultural backgrounds, includes fingerplays and action rhymes that have been chanted, sung, and loved by generations.

Dyer, Jane. Animal Crackers: ***A Delectable Collection of Pictures, Poems and Lullabies for the Very Young***. Little, Brown, 1996. This picture book contains a collection of Mother Goose classics, modern poems, lullabies, and simple stories, many of which celebrate special times in a child's first years.

Martin, Bill, Jr., and Archambault, John. ***Chicka Chicka Boom Boom***. Simon & Schuster, 1989. The rhythmical story of letters of the alphabet climbing and falling from a coconut tree.

"Predictable" Books for Toddlers–First-Graders

Aardema, Verna. ***Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain***. Dutton, 1993. Told in verse, this is the story of how Ki-pat, a herder, makes it rain on the dry Kapiti Plain.

Hutchins, Pat. ***Rosie's Walk***. Macmillan, 1968. Rosie the hen goes for a walk and manages to avoid many attempts on her life by a predatory fox. Also available in Spanish.

Lowell, Susan. ***The Three Little Javelinas***. Northland Pub., 1993. This southwestern tale, based on "The Three Little Pigs" and illustrated with Native American and Latino characters, is about three little javelinas as they try to outsmart the coyote who had hoped to eat them with red chili sauce.

Martin, Bill, Jr. ***Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?*** Holt, 1996. What children see is a surprising cast of animals!

McNaughton, Colin. ***Suddenly!*** Harcourt Brace, 1995. Time after time, Preston the Pig outwits a hungry wolf that is trying to catch and eat him.

Multiple-Language Books for Preschoolers–First-Graders

Brown, Ruth. ***Alphabet Times Four: An International ABC***. Dutton, 1991. Beginning with the letter A and ending with Z, this book offers a word that happens to begin with the same letter in four languages, English, Spanish, French, and German, accompanied by creatively bordered pictures.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. ***Family Pictures***. Children's Book Press, 1990. In this bilingual text (Spanish and English), a young girl remembers her day-to-day family life while growing up in Texas in a Mexican–American culture.

Hirschi, Ron. ***Seya's Song***. Sasquatch Books, 1992. A young S'Klallam girl follows the seasons of the salmon, interweaving aspects of the life and culture of her Pacific Coast tribe and using words from her native language.

Lee, Huy Voun. ***In the Park***. Henry Holt & Co, Inc., 1998. Xiao Ming and his mother go to the park, where they see a variety of people of different cultures, ages, and disabilities. At the park, his mother teaches him how to draw and pronounce some Chinese characters.

Rattigan, Jama Kim. ***Dumpling Soup***. Little, Brown, 1993. Marisa, a 7-year-old girl who lives in Hawaii, explains the traditions her family celebrates at the New Year. Hawaiian, Japanese, and Korean words and phrases add to the English text.

Stock, Catherine. ***Where Are You Going Manyoni?*** Morrow, 1993. Manyoni lives in Zimbabwe and on her way to school she passes many beautiful areas, wild animals, and birds. The book includes a picture glossary of wildlife and a key to pronouncing African words.

Beginning Readers

Eastman, P. D. ***Go, Dog. Go!*** Random House, 1989. Big dogs, little dogs—black, white, yellow, and blue dogs—they are all very busy going places and doing things.

Krauss, Ruth. ***The Carrot Seed***. Harper Collins, 1973. A little boy knows a carrot will grow from the seed that he planted no matter what anyone else may say or think.

Early Read-Aloud Chapter Books for Preschoolers–First-Graders

Cameron, Ann. ***The Stories Julian Tells***. Knopf, 1981. Julian tells great stories. He can make people, especially his younger brother Huey, believe almost anything, which sometimes leads to lots of trouble.

Milne, A. A. ***The House at Pooh Corner***. Dutton, 1991. The book is about the timeless adventures of Pooh, Piglet, Christopher Robin, Owl, Tigger, and Eeyore in the Hundred-Acre Woods.

Children's Magazines

Babybug
P.O. Box 9304
LaSalle, IL 61301–9897
(http://www.babybugmag.com)
Board-book magazine with illustrated rhymes and stories for parents to read with children. (Ages 6 months–2 years)

Click!
P.O. Box 9304
LaSalle, IL 61301–9897
(http://www.clickmag.com)
Contains science and social studies stories, both informational and fiction. (Ages 5–6)

Sesame Street Magazine
Children's Television Workshop
One Lincoln Plaza
New York, NY 10023
(http://www.ctw.org/sesame/
or http://www2.cdsfulfillment.com/SST/subscriptions.cgi)
Sesame Street characters are featured in stories, poems, puzzles, posters and more. (Ages 2–6 years)

Your Big Back Yard
National Wildlife Federation
8925 Leesburg Pike
Vienna, VA 22184
(http://www.nwf.org/ybby/)
Includes stories, poems, riddles, and games, with color pictures of animals. Simple text designed to encourage early reading. (Ages 3–6 years)

Computer Programs

Living Books: Interactive Animated Stories
(Ages 3–7)
These programs provide a place for children to hear a story, read along with the narrator, or read by themselves. They also can interact with characters and objects and play games that teach the alphabet, simple words, rhyming, and other reading skills. Each program also comes with the matching book. Some examples of titles:

Just Grandma and Me
The Cat and the Hat
Arthur's Birthday
Dr. Seuss's ABC

Many include versions in Spanish, French, and German along with the English text.

For more information, contact:

Broderbund Software, Inc.
Toll Free: 1–800–567–2610
http://www.broderbund.com/

Bailey's Book House
(Ages 2–5)
This software features Bailey and his friends as they encourage young children to build literacy skills and develop a love for reading. It includes activities to help youngsters explore letters, words, sentences, rhyming, and stories. No reading skills are required; all directions are spoken.

Let's Go Read! An Island Adventure
(Ages 4–7)
Children join Robby Raccoon and his friends in their adventures on an island inhabited by the alphabet. Included are activities to help children learn reading basics such as letter sounds and how to sound out and build simple words. Children can command the computer with their voices and record and listen to themselves reading.

For more information, including Spanish titles and a catalog for children with special needs, contact:

Riverdeep
Toll Free: 1–800–362–2890
http://www.riverdeep.net/edmark/

Young Children and the Internet: Places to Learn and Play

Arthur: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/arthur/

Barney: http://www.barneyonline.com

Disney: http://disney.go.com/park/bases/familybase/today/

Dr. Seuss's Seussville: http://www.randomhouse.com/seussville/university/

PBS Homepage: http://www.pbs.org/kids/

Children's Television Workshop: http://www.ctw.org

Smithsonian Institution–National Zoo: http://www.si.edu/natzoo/

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Armbruster, Bonnie B., Lehr, Fran, and Osborn, Jean. (2001). *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read. Kindergarten Through Grade 3*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy (available online at www.nifl.gov)

Burns, M. Susan, Griffin, Peg, and Snow, Catherine E. (Eds.) (1999). *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Clay, Marie M. (1979). *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties* (3rd Ed.). Auckland, New Zealand: Heinemann.

Dickinson, David K., and Tabors, Patton O. (2001). *Beginning Literacy with Language: Young Children Learning at Home and School*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Hart, Betty, and Risley, Todd R. (1995). *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Hannon, Peter. (1995). *Literacy, Home, and School: Research and Practice in Teaching Literacy with Parents*. London, England: Falmer Press.

Hiebert, Elfrieda H., and Raphael, Taffy E. (1998). *Early Literacy Instruction*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

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National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (1996). *Technology and Young Children Ages 3 Through 8*—An NAEYC Position Statement. Washington, DC.

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Neuman, Susan B., Copple, Carol, and Bredekamp, Sue. (2000). *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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Simple Strategies for Creating Strong Readers

Without doubt, reading with children spells success for early literacy. Putting a few simple strategies into action will make a significant difference in helping children develop into good readers and writers.

Through reading aloud, providing print materials, and promoting positive attitudes about reading and writing, you can have a powerful impact on your child's literacy and learning.

- Invite your child to read with you every day.
- When reading a book where the print is large, point word by word as you read. This will help your child learn that reading goes from left to right and understand that the word said is the word seen.
- Read your child's favorite book over and over.
- Read many stories with rhyming words and repeated lines. Invite your child to join in on these parts. Point, word by word, as your child reads along with you.

Reading well is at the heart of all learning. Children who can't read well, can't learn. Help make a difference for your child.

- Discuss new words. For example, "This big house is called a palace. Who do you think lives in a palace?"
- Stop and ask about the pictures and about what is happening in the story.
- Read from a variety of children's books, including fairy tales, song books, poems, and information books.

- From Reading Tips for Parents, U.S. Department of Education. Available online at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/pfie/reading or call 1–800–USA–LEARN.

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No Child Left Behind

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This new law represents his education reform plan and contains the most sweeping changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since it was enacted in 1965. It changes the federal role in education by asking America's schools to describe their success in terms of what each student accomplishes. The act contains the president's four basic education reform principles:

* Stronger accountability for results.
* Local control and flexibility.
* Expanded options for parents.
* An emphasis on effective and proven teaching methods.

In sum, this law—in partnership with parents, communities, school leadership and classroom teachers—seeks to ensure that every child in America receives a great education and that no child is left behind.

For more information on No Child Left Behind, visit the website at http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

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U.S. Department of Education
Office of Intergovernmental
and Interagency Affairs

400 Maryland Avenue, SW • Washington D.C. 20202

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Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
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Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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